

Ass't nursing director explains decision

To the editor:

This letter is to address why I chose to leave my position as assistant director of nursing after one year of employment at Sullivan County Health Care Facility. I am not attempting to assign blame to any individuals and I certainly hope to offend no one with this letter.

I want to start by saying that I feel like the current management team at Sullivan County Health Care is some of the best I have encountered. There is communication, mutual respect and a believe a true vision shared by the management team to provide the every best healthcare for our residents. I believe that the management styles of our director of nursing, Heidi Smith, and our administrator, Scott Wotjkiewicz, complement one another and help us all to understand and work toward meeting the challenge of providing high quality care while we are faced with staggering costs and declining reimbursement.

This facility is constantly in the political spotlight. Every person who seems to have a political agenda uses our facility and staff as the proverbial "whipping boy." Yes, it is the staff and the facility and ultimately the residents who suffer from the public bashings ... certainly not Genesis. I am neither "pro-Genesis" nor against Genesis, but I am tired of this facility's dirty laundry being used by someone's political platform. Does anyone ever read about any other nursing facility's state surveys in the papers? The answer is no and I know for a fact that we have, in my opinion, people with political agendas using the highly emotional topic of the nursing home to garner support for themselves. The commissioners are the delegates need to not only hold management accountable for the running of the facility, but more importantly, trust them/us to do our jobs. You hire us as licensed nurses, administrators, etc. for a reason.

The union is probably the biggest barrier to making necessary improvements to the overall efficiency and quality of the care at Sullivan County Health Care. Our management team has worked diligently to create strong teams, to be available to all of the staff at all times. (I have never worked any place where the director of nursing comes in monthly to all shifts to meet with direct care staff) and to encourage input on decisions in many areas. With the union, it takes one or two disgruntled staff to wreak havoc on any plans that

may have taken many months and labor hours to create. There is an adversarial relationship between staff and management that results from a way too liberal union contract that allows staff to essentially do whatever they want with very little resources available to supervisors. When there is an incident that warrants discipline, very often the steps that need to be taken are so laborious and lengthy, it is not taken very seriously by staff. Staff miss scheduled resident care time attending union events, and when they are at work, spend a lot of time discussing the next grievance or arbitration. In my opinion, the union essentially runs, or at least tries very hard, to run this facility.

Lastly, there is a real disconnect between some departments and the management or our nursing facility. It appears that some departments are not accountable to our administrator. This seems to have caused conflict at times and at a minimum creates barriers to communication and accomplishment of mutual goals.

In closing, my decision to leave was not an easy one. I am committed to this area. In fact, I grew up in Unity. I believe that this facility has the potential to be excellent. At this point, however, the necessary culture changes that need to take place for that to happen will not happen unless some major changes are made.

April Bartley